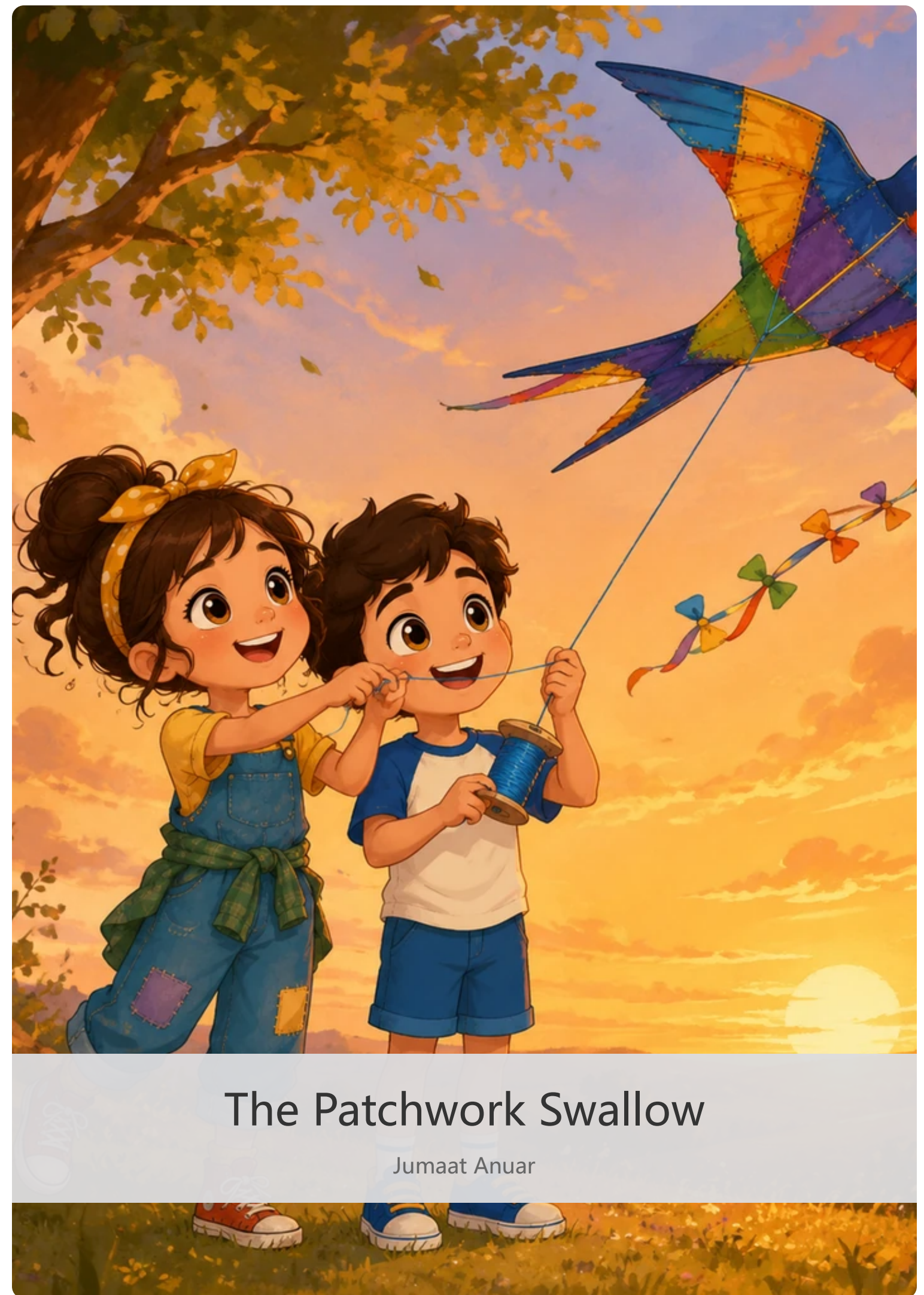




The Patchwork Swallow

Jumaat Anuar



Lily loved exploring the golden meadow behind her cottage, where butterflies danced among tall wildflowers. One bright afternoon, something unusual caught her eye dangling from the high branch of an ancient oak tree. It was a brightly painted paper kite shaped like a swallow, its long crimson ribbon tangled in the leaves.



Reaching on tiptoe, Lily carefully unhooked the swallow's bamboo frame from the twig. As she gathered the smooth paper into her hands, she noticed a long blue string trailing across the soft grass, winding toward the whispering forest at the meadow's edge. Curious and determined, she picked up the string and followed where it led.



Near a quiet stone creek, Lily spotted a small boy sitting alone on a mossy log. He was holding an empty wooden spool, staring intently at the ground with a look of disappointed longing. Lily stepped forward quietly, lifting the brightly colored paper bird so he could see it in the afternoon light.



The boy looked up in surprise, his hazel eyes widening with joy as he recognized his lost creation. Introducing himself as Leo, he explained how a sudden gust of wind had swept the swallow out of his hands. Lily smiled warmly and offered to help him fix the small tear in its paper wing.



Sitting together on the soft riverbank, they opened Lily's pocket craft tin to find colorful tapes and smooth patches of cloth. Working side by side, Lily held the delicate bamboo struts steady while Leo carefully taped the tear with a sky-blue pattern. What started as a simple fix quickly turned into a collaborative masterpiece decorated with tiny stars.



Once the tear was mended, Leo unwound a fresh bobbin of strong cotton thread and secured it tightly to the wooden frame. They checked the paper tail, smoothing out its crumpled silk ribbons until it was ready to brave the winds again. A shared feeling of excitement bounced between them as they carried the kite back to the wide open field.



The wind picked up, rustling the tall grasses around their ankles with a soft, steady hum. Leo held the wooden spool while Lily ran backward into the gentle breeze, raising the patchwork swallow high above her head. With a joyous laugh, she let go, sending the paper bird leaping into the sky.



Up and up the swallow climbed, dipping and twirling against a backdrop of fluffy white clouds. Lily and Leo cheered together, taking turns holding the tugging line as the wind guided their paper creation across the sunlit afternoon. In that magical moment, the quiet meadow felt vast and full of infinite possibility.



As the sun began to dip toward the horizon, casting warm pink and gold hues across the hills, they sat shoulder-to-shoulder on the grass, watching the kite glide smoothly in the twilight. They shared stories about their favorite stars, their secret hideouts, and the dreams they held for tomorrow.



When it was finally time to head home, Leo carefully wound the thread back onto the wooden handle and handed it to Lily, promising they would fly it together again the next day. Walking back across the glowing meadow, Lily held the kite close to her chest, knowing she had found not just a flying swallow, but a true friend.